in the country for retention of such professional talents at home. No legal steps are being contemplated.

Inter-Ministerial Council for Tourism

*69. SHRI SYDAIAH KOTA :
SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA :

Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether an Inter-Ministerial Council is proposed to be set up soon for the promotion of tourism in the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the date by which this council is likely to be constituted?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI SRIKANTA JENA) : (a) to (c) An advisory 'Board of Tourism Industry and Trade' has been set up under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister of Tourism to advise the Government on various policy matters relating to tourism and to oversee the implementation of the National Strategy for Tourism Development. The members of the Board include Members of Parliament, Secretaries of different Ministries/ Departments, Professionals and representatives of Industry Associations.

[Translation]

Development of N.Hs. by N.H.A.

*70. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
SHRI NITISH KUMAR :

Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether National Highways Authority of India bears the responsibility of extension and development of National Highways in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Authority has prepared any action plan for the extension and development of these roads;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether any time bound programme has also been prepared to complete this action plan;

(e) if so, the period fixed for the completion of each proposed National Highway; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (f) The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is one of the Executing Agencies of the Central Government for the development and maintenance of National Highways. The Authority takes up only those projects which are entrusted to it by the Central Government. To begin with, the NHAI has been given the responsibility for the development of 4 major corridors linking the metropolitan cities of Delhi, Calcutta, Chennai and Mumbai and the National Highways leading to major ports. At present, NHAI is doing the feasibility studies on these corridors on the basis of which, the work would be taken up. As such, it is too early to indicate the time frame for the completion of works at this stage.

[English]

Royalty on Crude Oil

*71. SHRI KESHAB MAHANTA : Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of existing rate of royalty paid for crude oil;

(b) whether there is any proposal to increase the rate of royalty; and

(c) when the rate was revised last and the norms followed for such revision of royalty?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI JANESHWAR MISHRA) : (a) to (c) Under the provisions of the Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Act, 1948 the Central Government shall not enhance the rate of royalty in respect of any mineral oil more than once during any period of three years. After considering the recommendations of the Eswaran Committee and discussions with the concerned State Governments, the rate of royalty on crude oil was last fixed at Rs. 481/- per metric tonne for the period 1.4.1993 to 31.3.1993 in February, 1993. For the period 1.4.1993 to 31.3.1996, an 'on account' payment @ Rs. 528/- per metric tonne towards royalty on crude oil was made subject to adjustment on notification of the final rate of royalty and finalisation of crude price in due course. This 'on account' rate of royalty has been increased to Rs. 578/- per metric tonne with effect from 1.4.1996.

For the three year period (1993-94 to 1995-96), the actual weighted cost of production will be worked out on the basis of the figures audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General and the final rate of royalty notified on this basis and necessary adjustments made against the 'on account' payments already made.